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Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, who gives sunshine to the just and the unjust, thank You for not treating us as we deserve. We hear Your voice, wooing us through the whispers of conscience and the promptings of Your spirit. You beckon to us through lofty ideals and through Your unfolding providence in the events of history. We see Your stately footprints in the courses of our lives.

Today, use our lawmakers as Your hands and feet on Earth. Through their work, transform discord into harmony, conflict into peace, despair into hope, and sadness into joy. Grant that their lives will teach us the lessons You desire our world to learn: Love, forgiveness, and peace. Remind each of us daily that there is always a road back to You.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, the first half of the time under the control of

the Democratic leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we have set aside a period of 60 minutes for morning business, which is equally divided to allow Senators to make statements. Following that time, Senators BENNETT and KOHL will be here to manage consideration of the Agriculture appropriations bill.

Before adjourning last night, the Democratic leader on behalf of Senator NELSON called up an amendment regarding rulemaking on Japanese beef. The managers have had time to review that amendment, and we may be able to set a vote on that issue for this morning. We will be recessing from 12:30 to 2:15 for our weekly policy luncheons, and we expect to vote prior to that recess.

I urge my colleagues, once again, to come to the floor and debate their amendments on this bill. If Senators have not contacted the managers about their amendments and no one comes to the floor to propose them, then the managers will be asking for third reading and passage of the bill.

We have a lot of work to do this fall. We need to use every day wisely, so Members should not delay with their amendments. I do thank everyone for their help and patience as we go through these appropriations bills.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

AMERICA'S AGENDA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this country is reminded virtually every morning that we are at war. This morning we learned that additional Americans—these, I believe, civilian contractors—have been killed in the country of Iraq.

I have been listening in recent days to the discussions in the Senate and discussions from President Bush about where we find ourselves and what our obligations are. We not only are at war, we have just experienced the most significant natural disaster in the history of this country along the gulf coast, with a million people displaced from their homes. Yet the discussion in recent days from the President and others is that nothing has changed. Nothing has changed. Our agenda is the same.

I went back and pulled out a speech of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a fire-side chat on April 28, 1942. I want to read what the discussion was by someone who provided, I thought, great leadership to this country at a time of war. He said:

As we here at home contemplate our own duties, our own responsibilities . . . our soldiers and sailors are members of well disciplined units. But they are still and forever individuals—free individuals. They are farmers, and workers, businessmen, professional men, artists, clerks. They are the United States of America. That is why they fight. We too are the United States of America. That is why we must work and sacrifice. It is for them. It is for us. It is for victory.

That is from Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The thing is, leadership is not about accounting or numbers. Leadership is calling this country together to say we are all in this together; yes, in a war, and in a response to a devastating hurricane. Yet we continue to hear around this Chamber and at the White House: No, things haven't changed. The agenda is the same. More tax cuts. Repeal the death tax—which, incidentally, doesn't exist. There is no death tax.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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But it is still a priority. We must repeal the death tax; tax work, exempt investment. Nothing really has changed.

The thing is, perhaps the President's agenda hasn't changed, but everything else has changed. Some years ago, 4½ years ago, we had a robust economy. It was morning in America, as it would have been portrayed in 1984 in the Reagan commercials: "Morning in America." We had budget surpluses, we were told, and things were growing and we had budget surpluses that would last 10 years. So the President, the new President, said let's provide very large tax cuts for a long period, the bulk of which went to the highest income earners in America.

Some of us, and I, on this Senate floor, said maybe we should be a little bit conservative. What if something happens? After all, these budget surpluses don't yet exist. They are projections. What if they do not exist? What if they do not materialize? What if something happens in the interim?

"Oh, be happy, don't worry," the President and others said. So the Congress passed very large tax cuts, and it was not long before some things happened. We found ourselves in a recession. Then, very shortly we found ourselves victims of a devastating attack by terrorists on 9/11/2001. Following that, we found ourselves in a war in Afghanistan, a war in Iraq, and then we saw, instead of budget surpluses, the largest deficits in history begin to grow in this country. Even as that happened, we saw the dependency of this country on foreign oil continue to increase to now over 60 percent and headed toward 69 percent. Following that, of course, a natural disaster unlike any we have seen in this country, with a million people displaced, called Hurricane Katrina.

The response from the President? Nothing has really changed with respect to his fiscal policy or his plans. We have spent over \$200 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan, all of it borrowed, none of it paid for. It is anticipated we will spend somewhere close to \$200 billion with respect to Katrina and the natural disaster, the devastating disaster. The question is, What do we do to pay for that? The President says we can manage that. We can manage that.

We send soldiers abroad and ask for their sacrifice, but we ask nothing of the American people at the same time: Be happy.

There are legitimate questions being asked about the response to Hurricane Katrina. But in my judgment we face a time when the question is not, Are we doing things right? The question is, Are we doing the right things? Are we on the right track? As I said, it is not about accounting; it is about leadership. It is about asking a country to join in common purpose and asking a country to sacrifice. Sometimes leadership asks people to do things that are not popular at the moment.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt lifted a country out of a depression and lifted

the spirits of the country in the middle of the Second World War. He did that by being brutally honest with straight talk. He said to the American people: Here is what you must sacrifice. And he said: Sacrifice is a privilege, when in this country, together, we go to war with a need to be victorious over the oppression of the Nazis.

So he asked the American people for sacrifice. That is what leadership is about. It is about being honest. It is about straight talk, which we have too little of today.

The truth is, this country is off course and we need to put it on course. The truth is, we have made some mistakes, all of us. We started a war in Iraq because we said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It appears there were not. The intelligence community provided this information to us with great certainty, but now it turns out it was wrong. The person who led the Central Intelligence Agency during that period was given the Medal of Freedom after he retired, for reasons I will never understand.

But we are where we are. We now must ask more of the American people. In my judgment, we should not just ask of our soldiers for their sacrifice. We are where we are and we must ask the American people for their sacrifice as well.

We had the largest tax cuts in the history of this country because we were expected to have 10 years of budget surplus that was unprecedented. It turns out that was not accurate. It turns out things happened that were not anticipated by this President and others, and the result is we now have the highest deficits in history, not the highest surplus in history. But now we are told that the tax cuts were not for the purpose of giving back the surplus. That is what they were designed to do, and that is what we were told they were in 2001, but now we are told the tax cuts are really about stimulating the economy. So nothing ever really changes and now we have a hurricane, a devastating hurricane that hits the gulf coast of this country displacing 1 million people, perhaps costing up to \$200 billion.

We need to create kind of a Marshall Plan to rebuild and to tell those folks we want to help you. Surely, if this country can reconstruct the country of Iraq, it can decide it is important to reconstruct this country. Any country that commits the billions of dollars we have to reconstruct the country of Iraq can reconstruct the gulf region of the United States of America. But we can't do that saying nothing has changed and our priority remains tax cuts for America's wealthy.

Cut spending; we should tighten our belt. I will support spending cuts. I believe all of us ought to tighten our belts. But if belt tightening, as it usually does, means withdrawing health care from poor people and the kind of things that hurt most those who are poorest in this country, that, in my

judgment, is not advancing America's cause.

Warren Buffett, the second richest man in America and perhaps the world, as far as I know, wrote an op-ed piece and said: By the way, when all these tax cuts proposed by the President are phased in—that is exempting income from investments and taxing work—I will pay a tax rate of one-tenth the tax rate that is paid by the receptionist in my office.

So the question is, Are we willing as a country to sacrifice? Have some things changed? Are we willing to change course? Are we willing to take some risks? Is there some leadership, perhaps in the White House, maybe in this Congress? After all, we are in this together. All of us want the same thing for our country.

I take no pleasure in criticizing the President's program, nor the President and his actions. But I understand that our future is dependent on making right choices now. It is dependent on our deciding to look truth in the eye and to insist the President do the same and understand things have changed. That requires us to adjust course. It requires us to ask of the American people that we have a common purpose together and work together and join together—yes, to support our soldiers, to support those in the gulf region who are rebuilding, to support those in this country who have no health insurance, to support those in this country who are jobless so we lift America up and make America better. That is our responsibility.

That will not happen by a message coming from the White House or from this Congress that nothing has changed, that our responsibility is to continue to press to see if we cannot give higher tax cuts, more tax cuts. At a time when we are borrowing money to fund a war and we are going to borrow money for reconstruction for Iraq, to give more tax cuts for the upper income people in America—why? Because those who do believe that America works when you dump something on top and it filters down—that is called trickle down economics.

I had a guy in North Dakota write me some while ago who said: I have been listening to all this trickle down nonsense for a long time and I ain't even damp.

The fact is, trickle down does not work. What works in this country is percolate up economics. You give the American people something to work with: A job and opportunity and hope.

When America goes to work, America does just fine. But, as I said, you have to look truth in the eye. And when this President says nothing has changed, he is wrong. My hope is that Republicans and Democrats will understand two things: Yes, we need to tighten our belts. Yes, we need to cut some spending. Yes, we need to decide when we are going to have to start paying taxes once again, and that we have a common purpose, and our common purpose

ought to be to work together and march together toward a common goal. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask to be given 10 minutes from the Democratic morning business and that I be notified when I have consumed 9 minutes of the 10.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator will be notified.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Friday, I joined 13 of my colleagues and went to view the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, LA, and Mississippi. It was a sight which I will never forget. This great bustling city of New Orleans is now a ghost town with hardly any activity other than a few people returning to their homes trying to retrieve lost treasures left behind from the flood—trying to put their lives back together by gathering all of this water-laden debris and tossing it outside in the hopes they might save their structures.

We then went over to Mississippi where it was a stunning scene in village and community and town after town—to see subdivisions that have been wiped away, to look down at what appeared to be 50 concrete slabs and to see no evidence of debris but evidence of destruction, all gone, scoured from the Earth by these horrible hurricane winds and waves which consumed some of these communities.

A man in Pass Christian in Mississippi told us of the panic that set in when the remaining villagers went to the library with hurricane-proof windows, believing they might be safe, and then, as a 28-foot wave hit this library, thinking they all might drown right there in that building at that moment. I can't imagine what that was like. I can't imagine what it was like for so many who went through this devastating experience. Some are trying to come to grips with their future and there lives.

The President came to the American people last week at Jackson Square in New Orleans and made a speech which I think will be important for generations to come. I was asked to react to it, and I said I think the President has given us an agenda that we have to follow—to rebuild the gulf coast, to rebuild the lives and the communities. But I believed then, and I believe now, that the President's call for this unity as a nation and this community of caring also has to be called for fiscal responsibility and accountability. We have to rebuild the gulf coast and help Katrina victims rebuild their lives. It is in our national interest. It is part of our national character. We rally as Americans to help our fellow Americans.

But I have a real concern. Instead of the "Big Easy," people are getting a big uneasy feeling about where Katrina

reconstruction effort is headed and who is in charge. Several published reports say the person heading up the administration's Katrina rebuilding project is none other than Karl Rove, the President's long-time political director. That is an incredible suggestion—that Karl Rove will have responsibility for the Katrina reconstruction effort, the No. 1 politician, the No. 1 political operative in the White House. Have we learned nothing?

Consider what happened when Katrina struck. FEMA was not there. Michael Brown is now gone. But how did he get in a position to be in charge of FEMA? It was because of political connections. He didn't have the experience. He didn't have the resume. He didn't have the skills needed when he faced the greatest natural disaster in our history. What was his claim to this job to head FEMA? His claim was he was a college roommate of Joe Allbaugh, who happened to be the President's Chief of Staff and campaign director in Texas who, when he left the FEMA agency to become a consultant, turned it over to Michael Brown, his college roommate, to take over—this little daisy chain of politicians who played out with disastrous incompetence when Katrina struck.

Now this administration, instead of moving away from the politicians to the professionals when it comes to rebuilding, has decided that Karl Rove is going to be in charge—the same Karl Rove who, just a few weeks ago in a political speech, said the Democrats didn't share the Republicans' zeal for stopping the war on terrorism; the same Karl Rove who won't give us straight answers when it comes to his role in revealing the identity of Valerie Plame, an undercover CIA operative, which disclosure of her identity not only endangered her life but the lives of many other career employees; the same Karl Rove who incidentally will take his mind off of the Katrina reconstruction effort long enough to go to North Dakota on this Saturday night for a big political rally.

Is this the person we want in charge of \$60 billion or \$100 billion in reconstruction funds? I hope not. I hope the President reconsiders.

This is a troubling admission—that this administration doesn't have leadership to turn to in time of crisis, if the best the President can find is his political adviser, Karl Rove, to deal with the disaster of Katrina.

What have we seen so far? The Wall Street Journal said last week:

The Bush administration is importing many of the contract practices blamed for spending abuses in Iraq as it begins the largest and costliest rebuilding effort in United States history.

We know what happened in Iraq—no-bid contracts to Halliburton and the buddies of this administration, contracts that have never been investigated by this Congress. And here they go again with Katrina and with Karl Rove keeping his watchful eye on what is being done.

The Wall Street Journal article went on to say:

The first large-scale contracts awarded to Hurricane Katrina, as in Iraq, were awarded without competitive bidding, using so-called "cost-plus" provisions that guarantee contractors certain profits regardless of how much they spend.

It turns out that not only are there no-bid contracts, but coincidentally they happen to be going to the clients of Joe Allbaugh. Remember that name? I mentioned him earlier. He was the President's political campaign director in Texas who became the head of FEMA and who left to be a consultant, and is now making certain that his clients get \$100 million no-bid contracts.

When is this going to end? When are we going to have true accountability? Once again, we see the same names coming out of Hurricane Katrina—Halliburton, Kellogg, Brown & Root—the names of Joe Allbaugh's clients who are, once again, coming up with these contracts.

If it wasn't bad enough, this morning's Washington Post, on the front page, tells the story of a Bush official arrested in a corruption probe. It says:

The Bush administration's top Federal procurement official resigned Friday and was arrested yesterday, accused of lying and obstructing a criminal investigation into Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff's dealings with the Federal Government. It was the first criminal complaint filed against a government official in the ongoing corruption probe related to Abramoff's activities in Washington.

The complaint, filed by the FBI, alleges that David H. Safavian, 38, a White House procurement official involved until last week in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, made repeated false statements to government officials and investigators about a golf trip with Abramoff to Scotland in 2002.

The top official in the White House that was in charge of procurement involved in the Katrina effort not only resigned but was arrested for misleading the Federal Government in terms of his involvement with the Republican lobbyists.

Now the administration comes out and says they found just the person to look into the mistakes of Hurricane Katrina. It is a woman by the name of Frances Townsend. I do not know her. She may be a very competent individual. But how in the world can we get to the truth of the question as to what went wrong with Hurricane Katrina? How can we really hope to discover the incompetence that led to all of this human suffering and devastation if the administration is going to investigate itself?

We know from 9/11 that the only way we got to the heart of the matter, the critical questions about what went wrong on 9/11, was with an independent, nonpartisan commission. Yet this administration resisted the efforts of that 9/11 commission being created and today resists the efforts of an independent, nonpartisan commission to look into what went wrong with Hurricane Katrina.